



**CALIFORNIA OREGON BROADCASTING, Inc.**

P.O. Box 1489 • 125 S. Fir St. • Medford, OR 97501  
(541) 779-5555 or (800) 821-8108

Magalie Roman Salas, Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
The Portals  
445 Twelfth Street, S.W.  
12th Street Lobby, TW-A325  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: MM Docket No. 00-39 -- Review of the Commission's Rules and Policies  
Affecting the Conversion to Digital Television

Dear Ms. Salas:

California Oregon Broadcasting, Inc. ("COBi") is the licensee of three full-power television stations -- KOBi, Medford, OR, KOTI, Klamath Falls, OR and KLSR, Eugene, OR -- and 36 television translators and LPTV stations serving communities in southern Oregon and northern California. COBi has been a pioneer in television broadcasting since 1953 and is strongly committed to a transition to digital television that realistically and responsibly balances the imperatives of the technological revolution with the realities of small and medium market resources and the dynamics of the digital marketplace.

In the comments below, COBi adds its voice to those of many small and medium market operators in urging the Commission not to delay the implementation of DTV but to recognize the enormous burdens accompanying the transition in smaller markets and that unique circumstances can significantly impact individual licensees during the transition period. For example, as we note below, our service area is both vast and mountainous, with dense forestation that poses extreme challenges to the delivery of a high quality broadcast signal and has required our use of numerous translators and LPTV stations. For us, as for many other stations, transitioning to digital television and replicating our existing service area can be conflicting goals that must be synchronized.

We urge the Commission in this proceeding to remain mindful, as it has been in the past, when, for example, it included Channels 2-6 in the DTV core spectrum, of the divergent and variant needs of broadcasters struggling to bring the digital television revolution to the country's smaller and more rural markets and those with unique technological challenges.



As a small-market station owner (markets 121 and 143), COBi is concerned about the effects the following DTV implementation factors have on its ability to successfully transition from analog to digital television in the allotted time period. While the Commission has stated in the past that financial considerations are not grounds for delay of a station's entry into DTV, the fact is that the capitalization available to small market stations not part of a larger station group is far less than that available to under-100 market entities. The equipment needed to enter into DTV operations costs the same, and in many cases, more (without the discounts available to large station groups who purchase larger quantities) than the equipment purchased by larger market stations. Therefore, the proposed acceleration in compliance dates of the following proposals will place a severe strain on our ability to meet the transition dates.

#### **DTV Service Replication:**

In the case of the requirement to replicate our analog service by May 1, 2004, this date is far too soon to be able to replicate our service area. In the case of our Medford, Oregon station (KOB-TV), we cover almost 300,000 square miles of area in southern Oregon and northern California in addition to our city of license. We utilize a microwave and off the air linked booster system consisting of 36 translators and LPTVs operating as translators to cover this large, mountainous service area. It will not be possible to convert these translators and LPTVs to digital or to provide a parallel DTV service to our analog service only two years after our required DTV on-air date. Even if we did convert the system to digital by that date, there are not enough translator channels available and a large proportion of our viewers would lose television service either from over-the-air service or by cable system carriage. A similar situation exists for our two Eugene, Oregon stations (KLSR-TV and KEVU-LP).

This requirement may be attainable for stations where there is minimal use of translators to extend the service areas in terrain-limited areas but this is an impossible situation for us to attain and still maintain both services during the transition period.

We encourage the Commission to delay the requirement for a station to replicate the current analog service area with DTV until the end of the transition period.

#### **Deadline for Choosing Permanent DTV Channel:**

Again, COBi feels that the time span of two years from DTV turn-on until the deadline to choose a permanent DTV channel is too short. We anticipate that in our small market there will be a low initial penetration of off air DTV receivers due to the high cable penetration of the cities in our market (60+%) and because of our very mountainous terrain causing signal reception problems. Further, the question of impulse noise problems with decreasing received frequency will have to be weighed in our decision to revert back to our current low band channel vs. the allocated UHF DTV channel. To adequately resolve these questions will take several years of operation with adequate viewer participation. We will require longer than two years to complete the studies to make this decision.

COBi recommends to the commission that this decision be delayed until at least 2006 as in the initial rulemaking.

#### **Status of 8-VSB Modulation Plan for DTV:**

While COBi does not advocate a delay in the implementation of DTV, we are concerned about the viability of the 8-VSB modulation system to provide reliable reception in certain situations. Of most interest to us is the dynamic multi-path situations encountered by us in our highly vegetated mountainous terrain. We are not basing our comments on any testing we have done, but on the results from Sinclair and others where they have encountered reception problems in urban areas. Unfortunately, there have been no published test results as far as we have determined that have been done in the type of terrain encountered in many parts of the western U.S. and in certain sections of the east coast. We strongly feel that the demonstrated multi-path resistance of the COFDM modulation system would be of great advantage to us in our situation, both in our metropolitan area and in our outlying areas where we use a large number of translators to provide coverage. The advantage of being able to use on-channel boosters to extend our service would solve the problem of available channels for translators both during the analog/DTV overlap and after the transition to DTV is complete. We have concerns with statements by the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) where they admit to shortcomings with the current 8-VSB receivers and their estimate of at least two to five years to resolve the problem. There is no evidence that the problems are resolvable at all, let alone in two or even five years. This places us well into the DTV conversion without receivers that work well in the majority of the reception areas.

COBi urges the Commission to actively investigate both modulation systems and consider a change to the COFDM if it is shown to be superior to 8-VSB with current commercially available receivers.

#### **Minimum Performance Levels for DTV Receivers:**

COBi definitely believes the only way for DTV to be successful is to require minimum performance levels for DTV receivers. The current level of receivers for 8-VSB is inadequate in many if not most situations, and there does not appear to be a solution to the problem in the near future. The CEA has stated that improved receivers are two to five years out, well beyond the critical introduction period where we will need to attract viewers to DTV. If their receivers do not perform adequately or at all, we will lose them to other services. We must be able to provide reliable and easily obtainable reception to assure public acceptance of DTV.

#### **Cable Must-Carry for DTV Signals:**

COBi believes that one of the keys to successful implementation of DTV is the need to have must-carry rules applied to cable systems for DTV carriage. As stated above, the cable penetrations in the major cities in our market will play a major role in the reception of our DTV signal. The must-carry rules in analog have been highly successful for both the broadcasters and the cable systems. The Commission must require compatible over-the-air DTV systems for cable and broadcasters and require

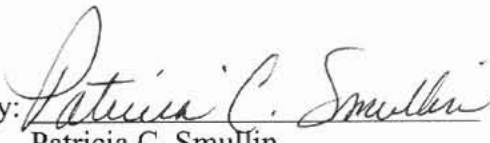

complete DTV datastream as transmitted by the broadcast station be carried on cable systems for the DTV transition to be successful.

**Analog Turn-Off Date:**


COBi urges the Commission to investigate how the analog turn-off date will proceed according to the Congressional mandate of 85% DTV coverage. Specifically, the Commission must decide if this determination is going to be handled on a DMA, regional or national basis. Our concern is with small markets. If the coverage will be based on a national or regional figure, DMAs with far less than 85% DTV reception will be required to shut off analog with the resultant loss of over-the-air television coverage to the majority of the population in the DMA. In addition, we feel that the method of determining the 85% coverage area needs to be established to give us a basis for promoting and assisting in reaching that level within our own DMA.

Respectfully submitted,

**California Oregon Broadcasting, Inc**

By:    
Patricia C. Smullin

Its President

By:   
Karl D. Sargent

Its Director of Engineering

Dated: May 17, 2000